1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

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THE FARMING CYCLE

221 241 A clearer picture of the agricultural cycle may be given by a monthly summary.

January: Little to do; second plowing of maize lands may begin.

February: Second plowing of maize lands.

March: Maize planting begins.

April: Maize planting; first cultivation of early maize at end of month; planting of vegetables and maize in *solares*.

May: Wheat harvest; second cultivation of maize.

June: Second cultivation of maize; some wheat threshing (continued in dry weather throughout rest of year).

July: Fairly free month; weeding of maize begins; second cultivation of maize continues.

August: Plowing for wheat.

September: Planting wheat; cutting maize fodder.

October: Plowing for maize; rains usually end; cutting maize fodder; wheat threshing nearly finished.

November: Maize harvest (if lower lands planted); plowing.

December: Maize harvest on higher lands; plowing.

SOIL PREPARATION

241 Land is prepared for field and garden crops (except for small kitchen gardens of cabbage and herbs) by plowing one or more times (pl. 4, upper left). The plow used is usually a wooden type (fig. 3). The Government has given some 30 steel plows to the *municipio*, which lends them to farmers; although these are all in use, they care for only a small part of the plowing.

231 241 492 Regardless of the type of plow, it is almost always drawn by oxen. Mules, and perhaps horses, undoubtedly are used sometimes, but not as frequently as in adjoining Aranza; in the entire season of 1940–41 no single instance was observed on Cherán lands. If the wooden plow is used, the long plow beam is attached to the ox yoke directly. Steel plows are attached to the ox yoke by a chain. An ox goad of wood, often with a chisellike metal butt (for sticking in the ground), is employed.

[427] A great many farmers own oxen; if they do not, they must rent them at 75 centavos to 1 peso a day, depending on the demand. If drivers are hired, 50 centavos a day is usual. On the other hand, if a man has rented his land on shares, he must make sure his tenants plow at the right time. Usually land is plowed twice before planting, but the depth rarely exceeds 6 inches.

243 While crops are small, posts are placed in the fields to provide perching places for hawks.

Worms may damage small plants to the point that reseeding is necessary, especially if there are long periods of cloudy weather without rain. Worms also damage about 35 percent of the ears. Deer damage crops badly only in isolated mountain fields. Badgers in some places are serious pests. The only remedy is to attempt to shoot the animals. Birds do little damage. Some maize is attacked by a fun-
[262] gus. The fungus is eaten, but it is not sold or prized as a delicacy as is the case in some parts of Mexico.

243 Trespass by domestic animals and theft must
672 be guarded against. Sometimes isolated fields
685 are completely stripped if not watched. Stray animals caught damaging corn are taken to the *municipio* and held in jail until the owner pays for the damage.

243 Unseasonal frost often damages corn, par-
[132] ticularly late plantings and in fields at high altitudes. In 1940, frost, heavy enough to damage some fields, occurred on September 29.

When maize is about 1 foot high it is cultivated (*"escorda"* also *"trozando"*) by running the plow between the rows, throwing dirt toward the plants. This is done a second time when the plants are about 18 inches tall. If it is delayed too long, the roots may be cut, the maize leaves will yellow at the tip, and no ears will form.

When the maize is in tassel, after the rainy season is well underway, the fields are weeded
[412] *"chaponeado."* This is done by hand with a short machete, called *"os,"* with a sharp curve at the point. Also, earth is piled around such plants as were not sufficiently covered by the cultivation. If the weeds are bad, a second weeding is sometimes done, but not often. If weeding is omitted, weeds climb high up the stalks and the crop suffers considerably. The weeds removed are piled up beside the fields and are not used for feed or fertilizer.

243 As soon as grain is well formed on the ears,
221 some maize is used for food, usually roasted.
674 At this time, also, guards must be set in the fields, not only to keep animals out, but to prevent theft. Whole families may move to temporary field shelters at this time and remain until the harvest. In the "plains," usually

243 221 674 only a few watchers are necessary. A pine tree some 20 feet high is trimmed and set firmly in the ground. The watchers climb this and spend hours standing uncomfortably in the crotches left by trimming the branches. Often several families may cooperate in watching, or several landowners may hire watchers, called *veladores*.

243 246 When the ears are well formed, but while stalks and leaves are still green, fodder (*"rastrojo"*) is cut. All stalks without ears, and the ear-bearing stalks above the ears, are cut, dried, carried to the house, and stored in sheds. This forms the principal fodder for animals. The stalks remaining in the field are not cut after the harvest, but animals are allowed to graze the harvested fields.

243 [462] The main work of harvesting is done by men. Women bring food to the men, and they also glean, assisted by children. At harvest each man takes two rows at a time. The ears are picked, husked, and thrown in a round cane-splint burden basket (šundis) carried on the back with the aid of a tumpline. Ears which miss the basket belong to the gleaners, who also take the nubbins. When the basket is filled, the corn is piled at convenient spots.

[482] [285]

243 464 466 The harvest is the busiest time of year. Except for a few specialists, the sick, and the infirm, everyone works, either on his own harvest or as a laborer for someone else. Labor also comes from other towns. Wages are 40 to 50 centavos a day, plus the right to glean. Women and children follow the men of their own household and close supervision is necessary in order to prevent too many ears from being dropped or overlooked. The workday is about 7 hours. The larger landowners have tried unsuccessfully to eliminate gleaning by raising wages to 1 peso a day. Men refused to work without gleaning rights, despite the opinion of most objective observers that the maize secured from gleaning had less value than the additional wages. The landowners would have saved through eliminating supervisors. When the harvest is over, some farmers treat all their help to a few drinks of *aguardiente* (čaránda).

243 492 [493] Most of the harvest is carried to town and the storehouses on burros. Nets are used to hold the ears. Sometimes other animals are used, and for some fields employment of two-wheeled oxcarts is possible, although they are rarely used.